

Statement on International Education Week 2008
Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings
Washington, D.C.

Welcome to the ninth annual International Education Week, November 17–21, 2008, a joint initiative of the U.S. Departments of Education and State. This year's theme, *International Education: Fostering Global Responsibility and Leadership*, recognizes that to meet the challenges of our global world, all nations must work to develop future leaders who possess an open-minded, comprehensive worldview.

International education is at the very heart of cultivating this leadership. Exchange programs broaden students' perspectives by giving them the opportunity to make new friends, learn or perfect foreign languages, and adapt to unfamiliar cultures. Every American studying abroad becomes an ambassador for our freedom and democratic ideals. Every foreign student studying in the U.S. brings new scholarship and perspectives that expand and strengthen our democracy.

To encourage student exchange, I have been partnering with the State Department to lead historic delegations of university presidents abroad. In 2006, we visited China, Korea, Japan, and India; and last year, we visited Russia, Chile, and Brazil. In each country, we encouraged students to take advantage of the creativity and diversity of American higher education, its focus on critical thinking, and its unparalleled access to world-class research. I have also enjoyed meeting many groups of foreign students studying here who confirm these strengths and praise our open and inviting culture. I am pleased that these delegations have already sparked more innovative cross-cultural partnerships in critical areas like language, energy, global health, engineering, and the geosciences.

International Education Week 2008 is a time to celebrate our efforts to prepare students for success in the global community and the promise of student exchange in training the next generation of leaders. I urge all Americans to learn more about the world beyond our borders, and I encourage students to experience other cultures firsthand.